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ABSTRACT

The information report to the superintendent of public instruction and to the California Board of Education contains statistics on the representation of minority groups in programs for the mentally handicapped (MH). Noted are school districts that have a 15 percent or greater variance between the ethnic group population in the district and the number of individuals from the ethnic group assigned to special classes for the educable mentally handicapped. Data are thought to indicate that the use of a percentage factor may not be an adequate index of the need for special educational provisions among ethnic groups. It is recommended that educators remove the label "mentally handicapped" from ethnic pupils and that they provide several program options for MH pupils. (GW)

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# ETHNIC SURVEY OF EMR CLASSES

Information Report
To
Superintendent of Public Instruction
And To
State Board of Education
(per E.C. 6902.10)

Presented April 10, 1974

To State Board of Education
POLICIES AND PROGRAMS COMMITTEE

EC 062783

California State Department of Education
1973

Allan Simmons, Chief
Bureau for Mentally Exceptional Children

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## (for School Year 1972-73)

"The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall annually report to the State Board of Education on those school districts in which there is a significant variance in racial and ethnic composition between special education classes for mentally retarded minors established pursuant to Sections 6901 to 6913 and the regular enrollment of the district." (Education Code, Section 6902.10)

This report is one of several that has been prepared during the last few years. The first was a report to the Legislature as required by House Resolution 444 (in 1970). The second formal report was in compliance with House Resolution 262 in 1971. A brief summary report was submitted in 1972.

Since the above resolutions were introduced, several significant legislative changes have become operational. These included SB 1317 (1970); SB 33 (1971); SB 171 (1972); and SB 1218 (1972). Other legislation such as SB 529 (1970) also had a significant impact on policies, practices and procedures in the determination of those pupils eligible for placement in a program for the educable mentally retarded. The criteria for admission have become specific regarding the use of psychological evaluations and parent involvement, including written consent. The legislation expressed the intent: " . . . that there should not be disproportionate enrollment of any socio-economic, minority, or ethnic group pupils in classes for the mentally retarded."

### State Total Enrollments in EMR Program

Since the 1968-69 school year, the enrollment of pupils assigned to special classes for EMR pupils has steadily declined. The fall enrollment figures are shown in the following tabulation:

| School Year | Enrollment* |
|---|---|
| 1968-69 | 57,148 |
| 1969-70 | 54,078 |
| 1970-71 | 47,864 |
| 1971-72 | 38,208 |
| 1972-73 | 33,091 |

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*Enrollment from the October first period report.

## Status of Ethnic Enrollment

The following chart presents a comparison of enrollments in classes for educable mentally retarded minors as of October 1969 and in June 1970 and June 1973:

| Ethnic Group | Enrollment October 1969 | Percent of Total EMR Enrollment | Enrollment June 1970 | Percent of Total EMR Enrollment | Enrollment June 1973 | Percent of Total EMR Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spanish Surname | 15,657 | 28.20 | 12,276 | 25.79 | 8,077 | 23.00 |
| Black | 15,022 | 27.06 | 12,253 | 25.73 | 8,776 | 25.00 |
| White (other than Spanish Surname) | 23,947 | 43.13 | 22,125 | 46.48 | 17,539 | 49.95 |
| American Indian | 244 | .44 | 261 | .55 | 200 | .57 |
| Oriental | 326 | .59 | 359 | .75 | 238 | .68 |
| Filipino & Other Minorities | 323 | .58 | 331 | .70 | 280 | .80 |
| TOTALS | 55,519 | | 47,605 | | 35,110 | 100.00 |

The large decrease during 1969-70 was the result of required retesting of all EMR pupils and the removal of those pupils found to be ineligible under the standards of SB 1317 (1970).

There has been a total reduction of 20,409 pupils or 37 percent of the enrollment over the five year period. The removal of 7,580 pupils is a 48 percent reduction in pupils with Spanish Surnames, and the removal of 6,246 pupils is a 42 percent reduction in the enrollment of Black pupils in classes for the retarded.

The change in the percentages of ethnic group representation has been small. A 5.2 percent reduction has occurred among Spanish Surname pupils and

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a 2 percent reduction among Black pupils. Neither group has approached the statewide pupil enrollments of 16 percent Spanish Surname and 9.3 percent Black pupils.

The data indicate that no ethnic group is heavily over-represented with respect to expected incidence of mental retardation. Professional surveys and literature, including the President's Commission on Mental Retardation, have estimated the incidence of expectancy of retardation conservatively at 2 percent of the population nationally. The President's Commission projected estimates of 7 percent in specific instances such as in low socioeconomic conditions where the prevalency of delayed or impaired development may be reflected in mental retardation. The data indicate that California public schools may be under-enrolling pupils who may need special help in coping with their school learning.

The Education Code Section 6902.095 provides that a school district shall provide an explanation to the Department of Education when there is a variance of 15 percent or more between the ethnic group in the district as a whole and those assigned to the EMR special classes. School districts that have a 15 percent or greater variance are noted in the attached list. In each case an explanation was given by the district if there was a variance of over 15 percent from the regular school population.

The explanations ranged widely in their rationale for various percentages of ethnic or racial proportions. It was noted by some that particularly stringent criteria have been utilized during the last few years, but that there still seems to be a higher proportion of referrals from the Black and Spanish Surnamed populations. Where variance occurred the district would argue that every precaution had been utilized to avoid the misplacement of any child in classes for the mentally retarded. It was a common explanation that educationally this was the best possible resource available for functionally

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retarded pupils who may be a high risk for future academic or school success.

## CONCLUSION

Despite five years of effort to correct over-representation of minority groups in programs for the mentally retarded, the results indicate the approaches taken in recent legislation are inappropriate solutions to the problem. The use of a percentage factor may not be an adequate index of the need for special education provisions among ethnic groups. Improved testing procedures, greater emphasis on non-test data, and test score limitations have resulted in a large reduction in the number of pupils being provided special education, but the reduction has been nearly proportionate among all ethnic groups.

Further actions are suggested at this time especially in view of continued legal actions seeking solutions to the apparent problem: (1) Remove the label "mentally retarded" from this group of pupils. Two major facts are supported by research: IQ scores do change and some pupils do make remarkable progress under appropriate instructional approaches; and, many children are regarded as retarded only by the school and only during the school years of their life. A third factor is the extensive public relations effort that tends to link all mental retardation with the more severe conditions of retardation. Therefore, a name change might help to reduce the "lifetime" stigma of special programs for the mild or moderately retarded.

(2) Provide several program options for the instruction of mentally retarded pupils. The mentally retarded pupils' program is the only special education program that is restricted by law to special day classes solely. Legislative change needs to be sought to provide a range of program options such as currently exist for physically handicapped and educationally handicapped pupils. These changes, together with continued efforts to improve the instruction in special programs, may reduce the social pressure that is so defeating for minority pupils, and will help develop a positive image of this program among all groups.

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The California Master Plan for Special Education has encompassed these recommendations and holds the promise of correcting a part of the problem. As full implementation of the plan is still several years away, the urgency of the present situation may require more immediate actions. The department will make recommendations as soon as the pending litigation has been decided.

Prepared by Fred Hanson, Consultant,
Mentally Retarded Programs

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# SCHOOL DISTRICTS WHOSE ENROLLMENTS OF ETHNIC MINORITY PUPILS EXCEEDED THE 15% VARIANCE OF EDUCATION CODE SECTION 6902.095 FOR THE 1972-73 SCHOOL YEAR

| County | District |
|---|---|
| Alameda | Berkeley Unified |
| Contra Costa | Brentwood Elementary |
| | Martinez Unified |
| | Pittsburg Unified |
| | Richmond Unified |
| Fresno | Fresno Unified |
| | Kerman Union High |
| | Kingsburg Elementary |
| | Kings Canyon |
| | Sanger Unified |
| | Washington Union High |
| Imperial | Central Union High |
| Kern | Kern Union High |
| | Wasco Elementary |
| Kings | Corcoran Unified |
| | Hanford Union High |
| | Lemoore Elementary |
| | Lemoore Union High |
| Lassen | Lassen Union High |
| Los Angeles | Azusa Unified |
| | Duarte Unified |
| | El Monte Elementary |
| | Keppel Union Elementary |
| | Los Angeles Unified |
| | Lynwood Unified |
| | Monrovia Unified |
| | Palmdale Elementary |
| | Pasadena Unified |
| | Pomona Unified |
| | San Gabriel Elementary |
| | Santa Monica Unified |
| | Saugus Union Elementary |
| | Whittier Union High |
| | Wm. S. Hart Union High |

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| County | District |
|---|---|
| Madera | Madera Unified |
| Marin | Tamalpais Union High |
| Mendocino | Ukiah Unified |
| Merced | Dos Palos Joint Union Elementary<br>Dos Palos Joint Union High |
| Monterey | Monterey Peninsula<br>Salinas Union High<br>Soledad Union Elementary |
| Orange | Centralia Elementary<br>Fullerton Joint Union High<br>La Habra City Elementary<br>Orange Unified<br>Placentia Unified<br>Santa Ana Unified |
| Riverside | Banning Unified<br>Palm Springs Unified<br>Palo Verde Unified |
| Sacramento | Elk Grove Unified<br>River Delta Joint Unified<br>Sacramento City Unified |
| San Bernardino | Chaffey Union High<br>Fontana Unified<br>Redlands Unified |
| San Diego | Escondido Union High<br>San Diego Unified<br>San Ysidro<br>Vista City Unified |
| San Francisco | San Francisco Unified |
| San Joaquin | Stockton City Unified |
| San Mateo | Jefferson Elementary<br>Jefferson Union High<br>Sequoia Union High |
| Santa Barbara | Santa Maria Joint Union High |
| Santa Clara | Morgan Hill Unified<br>San Jose Unified |

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| County | District |
|---|---|
| Siskiyou | Siskiyou Union High |
| Solano | Benecia Unified<br>Vallejo City Unified |
| Tulare | Dinuba Joint Union High<br>Earlimart Elementary<br>Exeter Union Elementary<br>Lindsay Unified |
| Ventura | Oxnard Elementary<br>Oxnard Union High<br>Santa Paula Elementary<br>Santa Paula High |
| Yolo | Woodland Joint Unified |